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# APARTHEID OBSERVED

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**AFFOR**

# Prologue- on Durban beach

After six busy weeks in South Africa I am sitting on the beautiful holiday beach at Durban, trying (with the aid of 90 pages of diary) to sort out a multitude of impressions. Much of the paradox of South Africa is visible from where I sit. A line of big ships moving towards the harbour is a sign of South Africa's buoyant and expanding economy. The golden sand, the gorgeous sunshine, the hundreds of happy holiday makers, the dozens of surf-board enthusiasts riding in on an endless succession of foaming breakers, are a picture of South Africa, the white man's paradise. For everyone here, including myself, enjoying this glorious scene is white. The other 85 per cent of the population of the country are represented by the Indian waiters from the carry-out cafes, the black women employed to hire out deck chairs and sun beds, and the black men in overalls who clean the beach and pick up the rubbish. Notices say 'Under Section 37 of the Durban beach by-laws this bathing area is reserved for the sole use of members of the white race group'; some of the nearby toilets do and others do not have Whites (or Europeans) Only signs.

The black woman from whom I hired my sun bed probably lives in the black township of Qua Mashu. We (my wife and I) were inside Qua Mashu on another visit to Durban a few weeks ago. It consists of a vast depressing sprawl of small houses and huts, some miles outside white Durban, from which the buses begin at 4.30 a.m. to bring the workers into town. I remember the scores of women carrying cans and buckets of

water from a communal tap.

On the plane down from Johannesburg this morning I sat next to an elderly white man just back from a holiday in Europe. He said he was glad to be back and would not want to live anywhere other than South Africa. Meat was incredibly expensive in England, and it was impossible to afford servants there. Here you can have one living in a hut in your back yard for very little. I said that perhaps this arrangement is more costly than it seems but that the cost is borne by the black servants and their families. 'Yes', he replied, 'but they're still just savages, you know'.

I have had six weeks in South Africa, plus a week in neighbouring Botswana on the way. This is a very short time in which to form an impression of a country, and I do not pretend that my conclusions are other than impressionistic. The time has been spent mostly in Pietermaritzburg, Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban and Kimberley. We have made a deliberate effort to break out of the exclusively white society in which a visitor's time would otherwise be spent, and have been able to visit five black as well as five white universities and colleges; to go into five black townships (usually taken there by an inhabitant of the township or by local white clergy); to see one of the notorious Resettlement Camps, and two of the 'black spots' from which the people are to be moved because their area has been declared white; to talk with a number of both white and black people who know a great deal about the South African situation; as well as listening to a variety of taxi drivers, fellow travellers by train and air, colleagues, and people who wanted to talk to visiting English people. Although our visit has been so brief, and we have been able to see so relatively little, it is nevertheless astonishing to

realise that we have in fact seen more of the conditions under which the black majority live than the average white citizen of the country. This is not because it is too difficult (although it is sometimes not easy) to enter the black townships and to make contact with their inhabitants, but can only be because most white South Africans do not want to know at first hand how the population whom they are exploiting lives.

I am in South Africa on an invitation from one of the universities. Most of the academic staff we have met are in principle, and some in practice (and occasionally at real cost to themselves), opposed to apartheid. Within the department of which I have been a temporary member we met with nothing but warmth and genuine hospitality from both colleagues and students, and have in fact made a number of new friends with whom we shall always want to remain in contact. I accepted the university's invitation so that we could see the South African situation for ourselves, and I made it clear that I would speak freely about what I saw. Much of what I have seen has, in fact, profoundly shocked me.

For South Africa consists of a relatively affluent white minority of 4.5 million exploiting a black (i.e. Black, Coloured and Asian) majority of nearly 26 million, depriving them by law of the freedom to live and work where they wish and of a vote with which to change their situation peacefully, denying them any but miserably inadequate educational opportunities, and trying to keep them as a race of 'hewers of wood and drawers of water'. The system is now manifestly beginning to break down; and the question is whether the abolition of apartheid and the achievement of black majority rule will come about by negotiation, to the accompaniment of only relatively

low-level violence, in time to avoid a holocaust which will destroy the economy of the country for black as well as white. And the question for us in Britain is whether there is anything that we can do to influence the movement of events towards the relatively more peaceful option■

## Some of the complexities

From outside South Africa one has, or at any rate I had, the impression of a solid white block confronting a solid black block. But the situation is in fact much more complex and varied than this. The whites consist of two populations, the Afrikaans-speaking (generally of Dutch descent) and the English-speaking (generally of British descent). The Afrikaaners are the more numerous and more cohesive group, and rule the country through the National Party, which has been continuously in power since 1948, during which time it has introduced the apartheid legislation, legalising and perpetuating an already existing situation. The English speaking population contains many critics of apartheid. In liberal circles, including many within the English speaking universities, one can almost take a theoretical rejection of apartheid for granted.

Much of the English language press is outspokenly opposed to the Government and its policies. But on the other hand, the great majority of English speaking South Africans are living happily enough on the proceeds of apartheid - the deprived social status, low wages, education for servitude, and appalling living conditions of the black workers, including their own servants. The dirty work of imposing apartheid has

been done by the Afrikaanders, who therefore bear the blame, but the English South Africans seem ready enough to share its benefits as members of the white master race. As one young black said to us, with the simplicity that asserts an undeniable moral truth, 'Yes, the English whites say they're against apartheid; but if the white kids had stood with us at Sharpeville the police would not have shot us'. (The memory of Sharpeville is still alive. We met a young black married woman who was a girl of ten in Sharpeville at the time and vividly remembers being soaked in the blood of someone, standing next to her, who was shot.)

But it is true that it is the Afrikaanders who created legal apartheid, and that if there is to be any voluntary dismantling of it, it is the Afrikaanders who must take the lead. It is easy for us in Britain to forget that the Afrikaanders (then known as the Boers) were themselves once an oppressed group — oppressed by the British — and that they showed superb qualities of heroism and dogged determination in their own struggle for independence. They, if anyone, ought to be able to understand the aspirations of the blacks for freedom and dignity and equal opportunities. And there are significant stirrings of thought and conscience within Afrikaanderdom. We met some of the Afrikaander intellectuals who have made a break with the entrenched traditional attitudes, and have in consequence been ostracised and attacked by their own community. That community is indeed 'the white tribe of Africa', bound together by a common historical memory and mythology, and with a common loyalty enforced by its own mafia, the Broederbond, so that to break away from the tribe must be a profoundly traumatic and costly move. One Afrikaander scholar who questioned some of the accepted Boer

mythology was recently tarred and feathered at a public meeting — a reminder to the world that Afrikaanderdom has a very long way to go before its central mass will accept any fundamental change. I think he would be an optimist indeed who can see the development of the Afrikaander attitude moving fast enough by its own inner mobility to avoid a violent black revolution.

The black majority is also divided along many lines. According to the 1980 census figures there are 15.9 million Blacks, plus those in the 'independent' states of Transkei, Bophuthatswana and Venda (amounting to about 6.7 million); 2.5. Coloureds (i.e. of mixed descent, mostly in the Cape); and 795,000 Asians (mainly in Natal). Among the Blacks there is the difference between the rural population in the so-called 'homelands', and the urban population in the black townships near the white cities. The 'homelands' (the three 'independent' states, plus six 'self-governing territories') were created by the apartheid legislation to deprive Blacks of South African citizenship. They are generally pockets of rural poverty with many of their productive workers absent, serving the white-owned industries in the cities. In the case of some, the 'homeland' is the place where they were born and are content to live. But much larger numbers have no interest in residing in or being citizens of an artificial state instituted to make them foreigners in the land in which they live and work.

There are also the differences between the ethnic groups, such as the Zulus, the Xosas, the Vendas and the Tswanas, these differences being roughly equivalent to the differences between the English, Scottish, Welsh and Irish. ■

# How do the eighty five per cent live?

It is the urban blacks whom the white person, including the white visitor, normally meets. These are the millions of unskilled and relatively unskilled industrial workers, as well as those who do all the menial jobs in the towns and cities and act as servants in homes, hotels and offices. In the late afternoon they pour towards the buses and trains that take them out to their black townships. Only two groups are allowed to live in the white city. One consists of women domestic workers living in servants' quarters separate from but within the grounds of a white residence. We occupied briefly a flat consisting of half a large bungalow, with another white family living in the other half. Separate from the house was a garage, with two small rooms built onto the back. In each there lived a middle-aged black 'maid', one working next door and the other elsewhere. Unlike our own house, these two small rooms had no electricity and were lit by candles and oil lamps. They had no running water and used a tap in the yard. There was one outside toilet, of the hole in the ground variety, for the pair.

In 1976 Africa Enterprise conducted a survey among churchgoers in Natal which produced the following facts on domestic workers and their employers:

Live-in maids are expected on average to work an 8 or 9 hour day, five days of the week. On the remaining two days they are regarded as partly on duty, and work between 4 and 5 hours;

7 per cent of those questioned expected their worker to be fully on duty seven days a week; While 65 per cent of employers are prepared to pay medical expenses, 8 per cent actually deduct wages when the domestic is off sick;

Only 14 per cent of employers subscribed to a pension plan or savings account in the name of their employee.

In 1980 the average starting wages for female domestic workers in Pietermaritzburg were:

- live-in R35 a month
- live out R50 per month (this includes busfare, which can amount to as much as R20 per month).

There are roughly two Rands to the pound sterling. The minimum living wage for a black family of two adults and four children in Pietermaritzburg is estimated at about R175 a month; and in a number of cases the woman is the main or the only bread-winner in the family. Although legally the 'maid' cannot have her husband living with her in the servants' quarters, we heard of a number of cases in which the husband did in fact live there, the white employer turning a blind eye. It is not however possible for the children to live with them - these have to be left with a granny or with another family in the 'homeland' or black township.

The other group of blacks living in a white city are the men in the vast workers' hostels. I visited one of these in Johannesburg, housing 4,000 men, with hundreds of rooms in tiers round several courtyards, four or six men in a room in which the beds almost filled the floor space. The hostel is for men only - their families, whom they support with payments from

their wages, being hundreds of miles away in one of the 'homelands'. There is no privacy in the hostel, and there are no recreations except for the numerous 'bottlestores' in the street outside and, doubtless, brothels somewhere in the neighbourhood. Nothing could be less conducive to family life than a labour system which requires these hostels for separated men. Indeed it is one of the most inhuman aspect of apartheid society that it undermines family life for so many.

Millions of blacks live in the black township outside the white cities and towns. At the entrance there may be a notice like this:

**GALFSHEWE BANTU RESIDENTIAL AREA**  
*Kimberley Municipality. It is an offence in terms of Sec. 9 of Act 25 of 1945 and the Municipal Regulations to enter this area without permission which is obtainable at the Admin. Office Galeshewe.*

The black townships vary, both internally and from one to another, in the quality of housing and in the amenities provided. The houses are either endless rows of identical small bungalow 'council houses', or else are built by their inhabitants and vary from tin or mud shanties to the occasional well built brick house with enclosed garden and TV mast. In some townships there is electricity, in others not. (Soweto, outside Johannesburg, a vast black city of over a million people, is about to begin a programme of electrification). In some, water is laid on to a point outside each house, in others only to communal taps. (It was announced whilst we were in Pietermaritzburg that in the nearby black area of Sweetwater no one has to walk more than two kilometers for water!) Some have outside flush toilets, others only toilet seats over a hole in the ground.

In some the houses are crowded together, whilst

others are unplanned sprawls. Most of the internal roads lack hard surfaces, and there is little or no street lighting. The general appearance invariably reflects poverty and deprivation. In these crowded communities, with high unemployment and large pockets of desperate need, there is inevitably a high crime rate and it is dangerous to go out after dark - especially on pay day. In Soweto for example, there were 368 murders in the year from 1 July 1977 to 30 June 1978. The main police station in Soweto is an armed fortress.

These black townships are usually some miles from the cities containing the factories and other places of work. Consequently the black worker has to get up extremely early, often between 4 and 5 a.m., to travel by crowded bus to his place of work. Leaving home before dawn and getting home after dark, he can see little of his family. If both parents are working the children have to fend for themselves, or be looked after by neighbours, throughout the daylight hours. Once again, the strain put upon the traditionally close-knit African family is one of the chief moral evils of apartheid.

Another hazard of life for a black family is to have the area in which they live declared white, so that they are then in a 'black spot' and are scheduled for compulsory removal to a resettlement camp. We visited two such 'black spots', viable farm communities now anxiously awaiting deportation. Whatever the size of the family, they are usually moved into identical small lots containing a small metal toilet and a metal hut or tent, which is on loan until they build their own house. One can imagine the anguish of being expelled from ancestral lands, removed from a spacious farm to a small metal hut, and forced to seek work in a distant

factory. The South African Council of Churches, in collaboration with the (Anglican) Church of the Province of South Africa, has produced a very moving slide show on the resettlement camps, with taped commentary, called "The Promised Land", which is also now being shown in this country.

About two million people have been moved under the Government's various resettlement schemes and about another million are scheduled to be moved.

The broad picture, then, is of a deprived, poverty-stricken black population supporting by their labour a small affluent white ruling class. The labouring population are virtually slaves, in that they are not citizens and have no voice in the ordering of their own lives. It is true that there are other countries, including other African countries, in which there is even greater poverty. But what is unique to South Africa is that the poverty is assigned by law on the basis of colour, the black community having been kept by a deliberate policy of educational deprivation from rising above it. South Africa has in fact immense natural resources, and could become much wealthier still if it developed its human resources. There could then be a higher standard of living for all, instead of special privileges restricted to those with a white skin■

## Education for servitude

The amounts per head spent by South Africa on the education of its children are:

|        |   |
|--------|---|
| Whites | R640 (R724 including capital expenditure) |
| Asians | R297 (R357 " " " )                        |

|           |                    |
|-----------|--------------------|
| Coloureds | R197 (R225 " " " ) |
| Blacks    | R68 (R71 " " " )   |

What does this last figure signify in practice? It means that even the most basic primary education is not compulsory for black children; that there are not nearly enough black teachers, and that many have very inferior training; that classes are much too big for genuine educational activity — classes of 60, 70, 80 and more are common; that the parents (who are generally extremely anxious to obtain education for their children) have to pay for the school books as well as paying a tuition fee. We visited several schools in different black townships, and talked to teachers as well as seeing classes in action. One will serve as an example.

It is a primary school with 1500 pupils, presided over by an able and dedicated black head who is however battling against impossible educational odds. The head has no secretarial help, and the school has no janitor, the children themselves doing all the cleaning and maintenance. Each teacher has a class of 100 children, and a much-too-small hut as a classroom. In each class 50 children come for the first part of the day, joined by the other 50 for the second part (so that she is then teaching 100 children at once), whilst for the third part of the day the first 50 depart and the second 50 enjoy the relative luxury of being part of a class of only 50. The children sit two or three at a desk, or stand or sit on the floor. Many cannot afford the textbooks, and share or do without; others cannot afford exercise books. All equipment, such as chalk, has to be bought from a fund created by parents' contributions. The parents also contribute to a building fund, which the Government will match Rand for Rand, so that some day there may be a proper school building. Because the parents generally have to leave home by 5 or

6 a.m. or earlier, they give their children breakfast before they leave, and the next meal when they get back at night. Until recently there were many cases of children fainting or being unable to work for lack of food during the day; but now a white church charity provides milk and a slice of bread for each child at mid-day.

In another township I noted the amounts paid by parents. In the lower primary school: R15 - 20 per annum for tuition and for the payment of additional teachers beyond those provided by the Government; R3.- 6 per annum for exercise books; R8 per annum for textbooks. In the higher primary school: R25 - 30 for tuition and additional teachers; R5 - 7 for exercise books; R10 - 15 for textbooks. (Quazulu, with a black population of 2.9 million, has 15,000 teachers of whom 3,000 are 'extras' paid by the parents themselves.)

Despite the heroic work of many of the teachers, all this amounts to a deprivation of education for black children, imposed by an allocation of State funds which does not permit genuine education. There is of course no way of changing this overnight; nor did it come about overnight - it is the result of decades of the deliberate withholding of education from the black population, beyond the low level required for servitude. It is true that many new schools are now being built all over the country. But this does little more than keep pace with the growing black population, whose rate of increase during the last decade was 31 per cent.

Because education is fundamental to the fulfilment of the human potential, as well as to economic and political advancement, the deliberate withholding of education from South Africa's black children, in comparison with the white children (on whose education

between 9 and 10 times as much is spent per head), can only be described as a major crime against humanity.

## The South African police state

I am not going to mention any names in this report, much as I should like to thank a number of both black and white people who enabled us to see a good deal of what we wanted to see and to meet many of those whom we wanted to meet. But although neither we nor any of those who helped us did anything illegal, to name them could nevertheless be dangerous for some of them. For South Africa is, from the point of view of anyone actively opposed to the existing system, a very effective police state. Dissidents, who reject the apartheid ideology, have to be careful about what they say on the phone; and a number of people whom we met know that their letters are opened before being delivered. In one case, for example, a parent posts regular letters at the same time to a son and a daughter living in the same town, but one of them is always delivered three days late.

People whom the Government regards as a threat to its ideology, even though they have broken no laws, are placed under a banning order: usually they may not meet with more than one other person at a time, and nothing that they say can be reported. (I met with two of the 150 or so persons, mostly black, who are banned at the present time.) Others, invariably black, receive much tougher treatment: they are arrested and 'taken out of circulation' for a period of

days, weeks or months, and then released, having never been charged or brought before any court. There is no *habeus corpus* (the right to be brought before a court) and the police can imprison and reimprison without having to bring a charge. I met a young Coloured man who had just been released after five days in solitary confinement, without any reading matter. Eleven of his friends were still being detained. We met another man, an ordained minister, who was imprisoned for five months before being released, without any charge having been brought. At any given time there are a considerable number of people under detention without trial, at the will of officials who are not answerable to a court.

But the situation is more serious than detention without trial. Many blacks have lost their lives whilst in police custody - Steve Biko's case being only the best known. In a church in a black township, where I attended the service one Sunday, there is a plaque commemorating a man aged 27 who died in 1977, 'falling' from the sixth floor of the police headquarters. We were told by a group in a house in another black township of a local boy who had recently been shot by the police and his body thrown into the bush on wasteland.

Perhaps the most morally corrupting aspect of the South African police state is the network of informers who spy on actual and potential dissidents. Many of these informers are black. They may be actuated by any or all of several motives: money, or some hold which the police have over them, or simply (so far as some whites are concerned) because they are convinced supporters of apartheid. It must indeed be an almost irresistible temptation for a black person, desperately poor and vulnerable, and with a family to support, to

gain police favour and some extra money by reporting on his neighbours. Once, when we were standing with our hosts outside a house in a black township, a black man drove by in a car, and we were told that he was a known informer and that shortly the police would call round to ask who the white visitors had been. We were told in a black school of a child who was recently found with a concealed tape recorder in a history lesson - history being a sensitive subject in which the Government prescribed text-book teaches a biased view of black history, so that black teachers are tempted to correct it in class.

What is so corrupting about the system of informers is that it breeds suspicion of one's neighbours. We were told of a recent incident in which a teacher's house had been burned down by pupils in a black township. The teacher and his family were taken into the house of some friends until they could find a new place to live. The hosts were then told by two normally reliable sources that the teacher was an informer, whom the pupils had identified as such. When they taxed the teacher with this he vehemently denied it and solemnly swore that he had never informed. It was impossible to be certain of the truth in such a case, and the infection of suspicion and resentment inevitably remained. Thus the existence of police informers corrupts and poisons human relationships in the black community.

Of course, from the point of view of the average white citizen South Africa is not a police state. Those who benefit from the apartheid system of life which the police are protecting overlook or tolerate police violence, arbitrary arrests on political grounds, spying on dissidents, bannings and censorship (James Michener's new novel, *The Covenant*, which is about South Africa, has just been banned) although they are not slow to

condemn similar practices in other police states, particularly Soviet Russia.

The South African police state is motivated by fear-fear of the large and increasing black majority. But in the Government propaganda the enemy is invariably identified as communist subversion. According to the official publicity, a 'total assault' upon South Africa is taking place, seeking to undermine this haven of democracy and christian civilisation. Indeed the propaganda to which the people of South Africa are subjected often reaches paranoid levels, strongly reminiscent of Nazi Germany■

## The Churches

The largest and most united Church in the country is the Dutch Reformed Church, which supplies the Afrikaaner community with a religious validation of apartheid. The DRC theologians do not of course defend any harshnesses or excesses that may occur in the course of implementing 'the separate development of the races' — they either deny that they occur, or treat them as mistakes which are separable from the concept of apartheid as such. And of course the bare idea of different ethnic groups living in different places - the Chinese in China and the Finns in Finland - does not, as such, imply any injustice. But anyone who is not blinded by self - interest can see that in the actual circumstances of South Africa apartheid and injustice are inseparable. The industries of South Africa's great cities cannot function without their black labour force; and to deprive those millions of workers of South African citizenship, forcing them to live in special black townships with markedly inferior amenities, or

to live in vast 'bachelor' hostels separated from their families, is manifestly unjust.

The alternative would be to allow all workers to live and vote in the areas where they work, with a common and equal system of public services, including education, and without any racial restrictions on whom anyone may marry or associate with, and with free trades unions, freedom of expression, and equality before the law. This would remove the injustice of apartheid; but it would do so in the only way that is possible, namely by removing the whole apartheid apparatus. One therefore has to conclude that the DRC's theological defense of apartheid is a classic case of the use of religion to justify selfish and acquisitive human attitudes and vested interests. If there is a 'sin against the Holy Spirit', this is surely it. Despite all the undoubted piety and personal moral probity which it nourishes, in the weightier matters of justice and mercy and social righteousness the DRC condemns itself as a supreme example of christian hypocrisy.

The churches of the English-speaking community are, in most of their top and some of their local leadership, committed to oppose apartheid; but the leadership has all-too-little support from the ordinary lay members. There is a fear of 'getting involved in politics'; and the small minority who seek to apply the christian ethic to the society around them are often regarded with suspicion as 'liberalists' (a peculiarly South African term of abuse), or even as communist-inspired agitators and part of the 'total assault' on the country. One escape route from political involvement, taken particularly in the Anglican Church, is into personal pietism of the charismatic variety.

The chief Christian voice against apartheid is that of the South African Council of Churches (which does

not include the DRC), under its present General Secretary, Desmond Tutu. He is a brave and dedicated Christian bishop, with magnetic qualities of leadership, whom the Government would no doubt ban if it could without thereby contradicting its own new widely publicised policy of conciliation and cooperation.

Much the greatest number of Christians in South Africa belong, of course, to the black churches. Here I can only offer a tentative impression. The new generation which has been making itself felt in the school boycotts is clearly important for the future; but the black churches do not seem generally to be providing either a forum for their ideas or a support for their actions. This is in surprising contrast to the role of the black churches during the civil rights movement in the southern States of the U.S.A. Such paralysing caution is due to fear of the very real power and brutality of the South African police state. But the resulting picture is an unhappy one for the future of the churches. How will they stand on the day of liberation, which will also inevitably be a day of judgement? I was in a black township, attending a church service, where the secondary school students were boycotting the schools in protest against inferior black education, and it was noticeable that there was practically no one in church between the ages of about 15 and 30. Apparently those taking part in the boycott were accustomed to meet on their own, and were not in contact with the churches.

The radical black students with whom I met on another occasion had an ambivalent attitude to the churches. The black consciousness leader Steve Biko had pointed out 'the logic of placing missionaries in the forefront of the colonisation process' (*Black*

*Theology: the South African Voice*, ed. Basil Moore, London, 1973, p.44. Banned in South Africa). Basically, they regarded the churches as part of the colonial and post-colonial history of the white man's oppression. But at the same time they were aware of individual clergy who were on their side in the liberation struggle. (Steve Biko's memory is alive and powerful. I attended a moving meeting on the third anniversary of his death, at which several hundred young black men and women rededicated themselves to the cause for which he died, ending by standing to sing, with the clenched-fist salute, the National Anthem of the yet-to-be-free South Africa).

And so the overall picture of the churches in their relationship to the central problem of South Africa today is not good. The electorate which has supported apartheid since 1948 is predominantly Christian and church-going. The biggest white church directly supports apartheid; the other white churches have a leadership opposed to apartheid but a membership largely acquiescing in it; and the black churches are generally afraid to engage in political activity■

## The next ten years

Almost every informed person whom I consulted in South Africa believes that within ten years, despite the country's great economic and military power, it will have a black Government; though there were different views as to how this will come about.

Externally, the protecting wall of white dominated states surrounding South Africa has fallen, with new black Governments in Angola, Mozambique and Zim-

babwe and, soon, in Namibia. In particular, the transformation of Rhodesia into Zimbabwe has profoundly impressed both blacks and whites throughout South Africa.

Internally, the development of South Africa's immense economic resources is becoming increasingly incompatible with the maintenance of the majority of the population at a social and economic level at which they are only capable of unskilled work in labour-intensive industries. For South Africa's industries are beginning to move into the phase in which more and more skilled workers will be needed - far more than the small white population can provide. There is a growing need for more highly educated workers than the present Bantu educational system can produce. Thus the insistent black demand for educational parity is beginning to coincide with white industry's need for better educated workers. But education inevitably fuels the general demand for political and economic rights. A better educated population is more politically conscious and more open to new ideas and wider information. There is thus an in-built logic in the situation which points in only one direction - towards the political liberation of the blacks and eventual majority rule.

Indeed the sweet smell of freedom from white oppression has already wafted over the borders from the north and changed the psychological situation. The black workers whom a white person encounters as gardeners, street sweepers, garage attendants, shop assistants, maids, and so on seem mostly to have been brainwashed into servility. They call a white man *baas* (boss); and when they meet whites on a town street they generally move to one side. But the new generation is resisting this brainwashing. Many of the

young blacks in their teens and twenties have a noticeably different bearing. The students at a Coloured school in Cape Town recently burnt their Afrikaans dictionaries in protest against its definition of *baas* as White man, and *meit* (maid) as Black or Coloured woman. Instead of averting their faces they look a white man in the eye; and instead of getting out of the way they hold their place. They are asserting their existence as fellow human beings, who have been denied their rights and who will never be satisfied until they obtain them. It is this new generation that has in recent months been making itself felt by boycotting black schools and universities in protest against the quality of education available to the black population.

Another and probably even more important new force which is beginning to assert itself is trades unionism. The black trades unions are mostly unofficial and still in their organisational infancy. In August 1980 there was a strike of some 10,000 Johannesburg municipal workers, seeking better pay and conditions. The strike was defeated by arresting the strikers' leader whilst he was with his lawyers in the court building, about to seek an injunction against the employers; and surrounding the workers' compound with armed police and giving each man the choice of going back to work immediately or being dismissed and sent back on a waiting bus to the 'homeland'. Even faced with loss of job, and deportation from the urban job market, about a thousand still refused to submit, and were loaded into the waiting buses. Whilst this incident showed the ruthless power of the police state, it also showed that the servility of the black worker can be dropped like a false mask. It is inevitable that the black trades unions will continue to grow in strength

and become a major factor in the liberation struggle. For the whole industry of South Africa, as well as the basic services of the white cities, are dependent upon black labour and are dangerously vulnerable to strike action.

It seems certain, then, that there will be increasingly militant black trades union demands for higher wages and better working conditions; increasingly strong agitation from the young for educational parity, and all that flows from it; and increasing guerilla activity not only on the borders but also in the urban areas. As in Rhodesia, it will become harder for the country to flourish. Industrial profits will suffer and the business community will be pressing the Government to achieve peace. There will be more and more casualties among the young white conscripts on the borders, and the electorate will be increasingly uneasy. On the other hand there may well at some stage be a white backlash and perhaps an intensification of police repression.

Responding to the incoming tide of change the Government of Mr. P. W. Botha has begun to promise far-reaching concessions and reforms. Presumably they hope to preside over a carefully controlled development which will move fast enough to keep the revolutionary pressure below explosion point, and yet slowly enough for the reluctant acquiescence of their stubbornly backward-looking Afrikaaner constituency. But how far does a white Afrikaaner Government contemplate going? Will it enter into genuine negotiations to share the political and economic goods of the country with the black majority, or will it make only secondary concessions and be prepared to fight to the death for white minority rule? For it is clear that there can never henceforth be peace, or therefore

stable prosperity, in South Africa until the blacks are acknowledged as full citizens of the country, with equal rights in every sphere; and this can only mean eventual black majority rule.

But subject to this inevitable outcome there could be considerable room for negotiation. For example, there may well be much to be said, in multi-racial South Africa, for some kind of proportional representation in Parliament, rather than the 'winner takes all' system that we have in Britain. Proportional representation favours minorities and could permit significant White, Coloured and Asian representation in a one-man-one-vote Parliament. Black majority rule would inevitably mean immense changes for South Africa's white population, but if it comes about by negotiation rather than by revolution they could still have a good future in a country which they will no longer dominate.

A foreigner is surprised by the degree of patience and goodwill shown by the South African blacks. Africans seem to be capable of a human relationship even with their enemies. Certainly as a visitor in houses, schools, colleges, and a hospital in various black townships I never felt resentment against myself as a white man - though I was conscious of smouldering looks from groups of youths in Soweto, and of an almost palpable wall of suspicion when first encountering black students. But it does not yet seem too late for a peaceful change to black majority rule, if the white minority is willing to relinquish power.

However, what is not too late today will become too late tomorrow or the day after tomorrow. And it has to be said that there are at present no signs of white willingness to relinquish power. There are conciliatory speeches from the Prime Minister and other members of the Government, from which the outside

world might think that apartheid is in process of being dismantled. But in fact even the 'petty apartheid' of Whites Only toilets and hotels and bars is still largely intact. (At the beginning of 1979 there were only 58 hotels with 'international status', i.e. allowed to rent accommodation to blacks, out of 1450 hotels in the country). More importantly, the arrest without trial and the banning of political dissidents continues unabated; compulsory removals of black communities from areas newly declared white continues; the grossly inferior educational system for black children, the grinding poverty, the separation of workers from their families, the deprivation of citizenship, all proceed as in the past. More importantly still, there is no meaningful dialogue through which major developments could be negotiated rather than imposed.

The newly formed President's Council, which is supposed to work out a plan for constitutional change, includes no Black members; and its Coloured and Asian members are not representative of those communities but are individual nominees chosen by the Government. (No doubt there will soon be Black nominees also, appointed by the Government). And South Africa's Black political leaders are still mostly in prison or in exile. This lack of consultation is perhaps the most fundamental grievance of the black community. For they are not interested in improved conditions of slavery; they intend to be citizens in their own land, with all the rights of citizenship. But, unhappily, more than thirty years of National Party rule have developed a climate of racism in the white electorate and have forged bonds of colour prejudice which now narrowly restrict the Government's options. In such a situation the prospects for a peaceful transition to majority rule cannot be good. The possibility of violent black rev-

olution, involving bloodshed on a gigantic scale, is very real. This is certainly a time for other countries to exert every possible pressure to add to the reasons for voluntary change■

## What can we do in Britain?

What can we in this country do to help? Not much. But we must support every form of international pressure upon the white ruling minority in South Africa to move rapidly towards full citizenship for blacks, with all that this implies. Nothing less than this can earn recognition for South Africa as a part of the civilised world. No minor improvements in the living conditions of blacks can ever be a substitute for the basic rights of citizenship.

To begin with a relatively small matter, the sports boycott should be continued and applied more consistently. South African Government propaganda would lead one to think that apartheid in sport is a thing of the past. But in fact multi-racial sport exists at present only to a minuscule extent. Until apartheid is abolished in sport, no rugby, cricket or other teams from South Africa, even with token black players added, should be received in this country, and no British teams should be sent there. To insist that apartheid is incompatible with the true spirit of sport can only help those in South Africa who are trying to move their country out of the apartheid era.

But the main form of pressure available is through British investment in South African firms and in international companies operating in South Africa. Most

black leaders would probably wish the world to dis-invest from South Africa, in spite of the fact that this would cause hardship to the black population, because disinvestment would hasten the end of the present white minority regime. But the vested interests are probably too great for this to happen. What however we can and must do is to press for certain basic conditions to be attached to all future British investment in South Africa.

(a) The workers must be allowed to live with their families near their work.

(2) Free trades unions must be permitted.

(3) There must be equal pay for equal work between black and white.

(4) A significant part of the firm's profits must be put into black education.

The first of these conditions would cause South African industry to demand and obtain the repeal of the group areas and pass laws, which prescribe where people may live, under which 203,347 people were arrested last year.

Whereas in the past many British business men have felt that they could best protect their South African investments by supporting the white minority Government, they should realise that the time has now come when it is in their interest to press that Government as hard as they can towards the granting of full civil rights to the black population. The alternative will almost certainly be a level of violence in which their investments must suffer massive damage. For it is clear that the transition to majority rule is going to be preceded by some degree of violence — and the greater the resistance to change, the greater the violence. The lesson of Zimbabwe, starkly evident to all in southern Africa, is that without the prolonged guerilla activity

of the 'terrorists'/'freedom fighters' the white minority regime would never have given way.

There is already guerilla activity along South Africa's borders, and this will undoubtedly become more extensive and presumably more effective. I do not, as a life-long pacifist, advocate this development; but I have to acknowledge its virtual inevitability. And only the white electorate in South Africa can decide whether the country is to descend into a state of spreading war in defence of white minority rule, with all the profound disruption to industry, commerce and ordinary life that this must entail, or will avoid this by radical constitutional change brought about through negotiation. But the inevitability of change, whether accompanied by greater or by lesser levels of violence, is now so clear that, whether from respect for the rights of the black majority or from self-regarding economic motives, we in this country should give unequivocal support for United Nations sanctions against the white minority Government of South Africa and, so far as the churches are concerned, support for the World Council of Churches' Programme to Combat Racism.

But it is not only in the long-term economic interests of this country to press the white minority in South Africa to enfranchise the black majority. It is also, and has long been, a moral imperative. It is ethically intolerable for one human group to treat another as the whites treat the blacks in South Africa - as an inferior breed destined to be their servants and labourers. And religiously it is disgraceful that a white population which regards itself as a bastion of Christian civilisation should systematically and ruthlessly exploit its black neighbours, depriving them of educational opportunities and of citizenship in their own country. Indeed in its deliberate disregard for basic human rights

South Africa stands out today as one of the most conspicuously unchristian sections of the community of mankind.

But, finally, Britain should also implement more effectively the rights of its own black and brown citizens; for the struggle for human rights is ultimately indivisible■

Two striking recent novels about life in South Africa: André Brink, *A Dry White Season* (W. H. Allen & Co., 1979) — about the South African police state; and Elsa Joubert, *Poppie* (Hodder, 1980) — the moving story of a black family in South Africa during the last thirty years.

## Appendix

### The 1980 South African Census

|  |              |
|--|--------------|
| Blacks in the Republic of South Africa                                     | 15.9 million |
| (Blacks in the 'independent' states of Transkei, Bophuthatswana and Venda) | 6.7 "        |
| Whites   | 4.5 "        |
| Coloured   | 2.5 "        |
| Asians   | 795,000      |
| Total  | 30.4 million |

White proportion: 14.8 per cent.

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